

DDT

in Bottom Fish from the
Yakima River



Mountain Whitefish



Bridgelip Sucker



Common Carp

*Photos courtesy of
American Fisheries Society
(Wydoski, Whitney, Scarola)*

recommendation:
Eat fewer bottom fish.

DDT

is a pesticide that can be harmful to your health. DDT may be linked to breast cancer and problems with:

- the immune system
- the nervous system
- liver function.

A recent study found high levels of DDT in bottom fish in the Yakima River.

DDT builds up in fat tissue. Bottom fish have more fat than other types of fish, and they take in more DDT because of where they feed.

Recommendations:

To reduce your exposure to the pesticide DDT, Washington State Department of Health recommends that you:

- Limit the amount of bottom fish you eat to one meal per week.
- Eat fish such as trout, instead of bottom feeding fish.
- Eat other protein foods, such as beans and rice.

If you eat bottom fish:

- Remove the fat along the belly and back of the fish before cooking.
- Do not eat the fish skin.
- Allow the fat to drip off during cooking. Barbeque or broil on a rack—avoid frying.

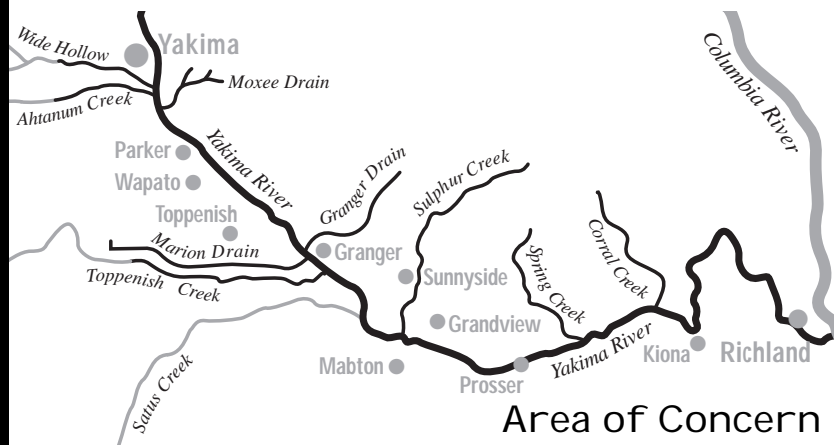
Background

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) studied the water quality in the Yakima River Basin between 1989 and 1991. A variety of fish from many locations along the river and its tributaries were collected as part of this project. Large scale sucker, bridgelip sucker, and mountain whitefish had the highest levels of the pesticide DDT.

USGS turned over the results of their study to the Washington State Department of Health. The Department evaluated how DDT might affect the health of people who eat these fish. It was determined that people who frequently eat bottom fish caught in Yakima River may suffer adverse health effects.

Area of Concern and Type of Fish

- **The lower Yakima River and agricultural drains, from the city of Yakima to the Columbia River.** Also, creeks and tributaries on the lower Yakima River near the area where they flow into the river.
- **Large scale sucker, bridgelip sucker, and mountain whitefish.** Other bottom fish, such as carp, channel catfish and squaw fish may also have high levels of DDT.



After careful study, the Department of Health makes these recommendations to ensure the safety of people who frequently eat bottom fish from the Yakima River. The Department plans to continue studying this issue by conducting a fish consumption survey in the lower Yakima River basin.

About DDT:

Starting in the 1940s, the pesticide DDT was widely used to control insects, especially in agriculture. DDT was banned in the United States in 1972.

This toxic chemical is slow to break-down and it persists in the environment today. People are exposed to DDT when they eat foods, such as fish, that have taken in DDT from the environment.

In this pamphlet the term DDT refers to the pesticide DDT plus its break-down products DDE and DDD.

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